

Date: June 10, 2013	From: Janet Sharkis, Executive Director of the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities
For Immediate Release	Contact information: <a href="mailto:janet.sharkis@hhsc.state.tx.us">janet.sharkis@hhsc.state.tx.us</a> 512-769-0564

### Houstonites to be Honored by State Agency

The Honorable Bonnie Crane Hellums and Linda Kagey, LCDC, are to be honored by the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD) for their work as part of the state's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Collaborative. They will both receive awards on Friday, June 21, 2013 at 10:00 during the agency's Executive Committee meeting, which will be hosted by Texas Children's Hospital.

Both Judge Hellums and Linda Kagey chair active committees, Access to Care for Children and the Community Education and Awareness Committee, respectively. They also were leaders in organizing the state's first plan on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD); more importantly, they are leaders in implementing the plan. One in 100 children is impacted by an FASD, which is the leading cause of preventable intellectual disabilities. In addition to the cognitive/memory issues, prenatal alcohol exposure causes sensory disorders, challenges in executive functioning, planning and impulse control. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more American women are drinking more heavily than ever before: one in eight women binge drink - defined as four drinks or more in one sitting - about three times a month. A forthcoming study in the October 2013 issue of the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* found that college-aged women are drinking more often than their male counterparts, confirming a January 2013 study of college students in Spain which found that female students were more likely to binge drink than male students.

Janet Sharkis, Executive Director commented, "Judge Hellums is leading the charge to identify children who may have an FASD so that they can obtain appropriate intervention. Children and adults with the disabilities associated with prenatal alcohol need lifelong support, but they can be successful with early intervention and support. Linda Kagey is a tireless advocate for educating the public and professionals

about FASD. Most recently, TOPDD conducted three Training of Trainers programs to spread the word on FASD. Linda's committee had the vision for this work. Both Judge Hellums and Linda Kagey have ideal backgrounds for this work. In addition to her J.D. and experience in the courtroom, Judge Hellums is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She has a deep understanding of the needs of the children and families impacted by alcohol. Linda's Kagey's expertise in addiction, family systems and the needs of special populations and 20 years of experience in the field of chemical dependency are invaluable in this work. Both of these women bring incredible knowledge and skills to the table, but what is most valuable and impressive is their dedication and commitment to preventing FASD and intervening/supporting individuals with an FASD. It is an honor to have them as activists in this work."

###